Gandhamardan Bauxite Project at Sambalpur, Orissa

*144. SHRI BASUDEB MOHAPATRA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO) propose to abandon the Gandhamardan Bauxite Mining Project at Sambalpur, Orissa by the end of the current financial year;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) the estimated cost of the Project and how much amount had been spent so far on this project?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The Project was sanctioned in July, 1982 at an estimated cost of Rs. 31.20 crores. Upto December, 1988, an amount of Rs. 25.95 crores has been spent on this Project.

SHRI BASUDEB MOHAPATRA: Sir, the local people are opposing the project on the ground that it would destroy the ecology in the region and deprive 50,000 local persons, mostly tribals and Harijans, of their livelihood. Thousands of local people, mostly tribals, allege that the project would destroy the area and the environment and it would ultimately snatch their livelihood as they have been depending on the forest produce for their bread and butter. They further allege that the project will dry up the perennial streams in the area. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether it is a fact that due to the agitation, all the work at the bauxite project has remained suspended since December, 1985.

Sir, part 2 of my question is this. The hon. Minister has stated that the project was sanctioned in July, 1982 at an estimated cost of Rs. 31.20 crores. Sir, I would like to know whether, following the suspension of the work, the cost of the project has gone up. I want to know the actual figure at present.

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: Sir, the hon. Member has stated that about 50,000 tribals were dislocated due to the operation of this project. I emphatically deny this allegation or contention. The hon. Member is aware, the position is that there will be overall development of the tribals in case this project comes into operation.

He has said that it will dislocate the local population and will affect the environment of the area. That also I deny. We had appointed the Nag Choudhry Committee, and it has given a report that the project will be helpful for the environment of the area.

So far as his two questions are concerned, that the local population is agitating that this project should be suspended, I agree with the hon. Member that due to the agitation by some local agitators who do not want this project to come up, we have suspended the work, and we would not like to take up the work unless there is some agreement with the local agitators.

Second, he wants to know whether the cost of the project is going to go up when the work is resumed. Obviously, when the project has been suspended, as and when we resume the work, the cost will naturally go up.

SHRI BASUDEB MOHAPATRA: Sir, my second supplementary is, part 1, whether the Government is aware of the fact that a tripartite discussion was held recently in Bhubaneshwar to resolve the issue among the representatives of the Gandha . Mardan Surakshya Yuba Parisad, the State Government and the BALCO authorities. Then what was the

decision of that discussion communicated to the Central Goverment?

The second part of my question is before sanctioning the project whether the environment clearance was sought for from the Environment Department. If so, what was the opinion of the Environment Department? In this regard I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Forest Department of the State Government opposed the project stating that it would extremely damage the forestry resources of the area.

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: Let me tell the hon. Member that we have made and we will be making all out efforts to see that there is some mutual and honourable settlement between the agitators and the project authorities. We have sought the indulgence of the Chief Minister of Orissa in this regard. I am told that he held a meeting with the agitators and with some others. I have not yet formally got any recommendation or any indication from the Chief Minister of Orissa, but I am told that he would like to discuss the matter with us. We shall thereafter take a final view.

So far as the second point on the question of environment clearance is concerned, I may inform the hon. Member that the provisional environmment clearance had been given at that time and the project had been sanctioned. The State Government also was very particular to have the project. The local Member of Parliament and some of the local MLAs also were very particular that this project should come up, but surprisingly now the local MP says that the project need not come up. That is what I am told.

So far as the area that is going to come up under the Gandhamardan project is concerned the hill area is about 200 square kilometres and we require only 162 hectares of land for mining of bauxite in this area. So, it is not correct that the entire forest wealth will get destroyed. We have adopted all modern methods to save the ecology and to provide employment to the local people. I think the land of only 226 people will get affected and we have ensured that one person per family will be employed in the company.

SHRI DHARANIDHAR BASUMATARI: I have heard with rapt attention the reply given by the hon. Minister. Sir, setting up such project gives rise to long-standing problems. As tribals we do not have any objection to the establishment of any project or anything, but from my experience I would like to point out one thing. Every time such projects, as for instance the Ranchi Heavy Engineering project at Bailadilla, are established, they are established in the tribal areas. We do not object to establishment of any project to develop the country, but why is it that the humanitarian aspect is lost sight of. And because of this lakhs and lakhs of tribals are uprooted.

The hon. Minister in his reply is talking only of the project and all that, but he is not thinking about the human sufferings that it will cause. I would like to ask him whether the policy laid down by the late Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, that when any project is established at a place, the people who get uprooted from their homes in the process, would be provided land for land to develop. Only with money provided to them they cannot develop. Compared to what is paid to the affluent sections of the society, they are paid 25 to 50 per cent less. Therefore, money cannot be of much help to them. So, I would like to know whether the policy adopted by Pandit Nehru is still being adhered to by the present Government at the Centre.

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: I can assure the hon. Member that the government is very anxious and very keen and determined to see the upliftment of the tribal people in the country. Every effort will be made to see that the areas where the tribals live are developed

and assistance for the provision of livelihood is given to them. I may tell the hon. Member that so far as this project is concerned, if the local people do not want development of this area, I will be the last person to enforce or impose upon them this project though it will cost us much. But I am still trying to persuade the people that this project is in their larger interests. Naturally, there are certain vested interests in that area who do not like development of the area. So far as the development of that area is concerned, I may tell the hon. Member the main features of the project will be : (1) of the 226 families who get affected, one eligible person from every family will get employment. (2) we will finance all irrigation and drinking water projects in that area. (3) we will adopt two villages for rendering various welfare programmes in that area. (4) we will construct about 25 KMs of railway track and (5) we will construct and maintain about 18 KMs of tar road in that area. In addition to that I may tell the hon. Member that the people whose land will get affected will be provided alternative land for construction of the houses.

PROF. CHANDRESH P. THAKUR: Mr. Chariman, Sir, I am very much encouraged by the reply of the Minister. My question relates to the bauxite mining and its employment implications particularly fo the Tribal people. I would like to draw the attention of the Government, through you, towards the possibility of job opportunities being increased in the Tribal region of Chota Nagpur. Chota Nagpur is rich in bauxite with a long history of bauxite mining but total employment implication in terms of local benefit has not been coming because in mining the employment comes not from mining alone but downstream activity. In Chota Nagpur bauxite mining has led to only alumina plant of INDAL at Murli. Beyond that downstream employment potential comes from further use of alumina within that region. Now, unfortunately this has not been happening. Would the Minister consider the possibility of a perspective plan under which either INDAL take up downstream activity or a public sector project is started so that bauxite is used for the purpose of generating maximum employment for the benefit of the Tribal people in that area?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is about Orissa. But if you can answer...

SHRI MAKHAN LAL FOTEDAR: I will answer it in general terms. He has referred to a private firm but I am not concerned about the private firm as to what it is doing. However, I can tell the hon. Member that we are adopting ecology sympathetic mining and this will be done. While we want to protect the area from pollution, naturally employment will be less and we will be doing things by mechanical means to a greater extent. So far as his suggestion regarding INDAL is concerned, the concerned people will speak to INDAL.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 145.

*145[*The questioner (Shri Raoof Valiullah) was absent. For answer* vide. *Col. 31-32* infra].

Poor visibility in TV transmitters in Sangli, Kolhapur and Satara

* 146. SHRI VISHWASRAO RAMRAO PATIL:
SHRI A. G. KULKARNI: †

Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the recent Press reports regarding the poor visibility in the televisions in Sangli, Kolhapur and Satara areas; if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(b) what steps Government propose to take to improve the performance of low

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri A. G. Kulkarni